

LOCAL ENTOMOLOGICAL NOTES.

Members of the New York Entomological Society and all others, are solicited to contribute to this column, their rare captures, local lists and other items of interest relating to the insect fauna of New York City and vicinity.

SOME NOTES ON THE RAVAGES OF THE WHITE ANT.

(*TERMES FLAVIPES*).

LOUIS H. JOUTEL.

The rapid increase, within a few years of the white ants (*Termes flavipes*) in the city of New York and especially Harlem which is now overrun with them, makes the fact of their present and future injury a very serious one, especially as their habits and lives while underground are so very little known, it having always been supposed that there was but one queen in each colony, while the fact is that their number varies in different colonies, having found as many as nine and another time fourteen laying and fertile queens living together in the same cell or gallery, this being I believe the first record of queens being found.

They, like many other insects are injurious or beneficial according to circumstances; when keeping to the woods which is their natural home, they do only good as living generally in dead and decaying wood, they help, with hosts of other insects, to clear the ground for a new growth; but, when they get in a city and begin to make sawdust of our homes, it is time to call a halt and try to find means to destroy them.

My observations as to the injury they do extends over a period of many years, and while somewhat limited as to area (having mostly taken place at or near my home) have been very thorough. The fact that they always work under cover helps to protect them and hides the mischief they do until too late to prevent it, and when discovered is generally attributed to some other cause.

A few examples of their ravages in my house will help to give you a general idea of the immense amount of damage and injury they are capable of doing in a city like ours, amounting to many thousands of dollars in the course of only one year.

When I moved into my present house, I found the frame work of the cellar windows all eaten away, only a thin shell composed of the paint and a few fibres of wood remaining, they had also begun to eat the sash when accidentally discovered. From

outside appearances the sash and frame were as substantial as when new, no trace of their ravages being visible.

Last year, having occasion to change the staging in my greenhouse, I found the posts measuring four inch square, and which were set on bricks to prevent the Termites from getting at them, were entirely hollowed in the middle leaving only a thin shell of wood on the outside, they had entered the bottom of the post by making a passage between the two bricks on which the post were set.

It is impossible in my garden to put a stake, board, posts, or wood of any kind, in or on the ground without having it eaten away by the Termites in the course of the summer, and those of my neighbors who have plank walks are obliged to renew them annually.

A frame house next door was sagging so much that the owner had to have it underpinned and raised with stone, it being found that the beams resting on the ground were rotten and "eaten by worms," but I believe that they were devoured by the white ants which annually swarmed in countless myriads from the structure.

I also observed last year in a cellar in the vicinity, the tunnels of the ants running in all directions along the walls, and ceilings, and the posts supporting the centre girder entirely honey-combed by them, and I have no doubt if they had been left at work another year or two, serious damage to the building would have resulted.

On three several occasions I have seen them issuing by millions during the swarming season from the cellars of several frame houses on Third Avenue, where, although I have not had the opportunity to examine their ravages, I have no doubt that they were considerable, as the buildings have settled so much that they have been repaired several times.

It is not alone to dead wood, whether sound or decaying, that they confine their operations, living plants and shrubs are just as liable to their attacks, and some kinds seem to be preferred to the decaying wood which is their natural food, such are geraniums of which they are very fond, eating everything but the outer skin and leaves which they leave intact. I had over twenty (20) standard geraniums from two to three feet high destroyed by them in one summer, as well as the stakes which supported them, red currants are also liable to their attacks, besides various other shrubs and plants, while the roots of grasses also serve them as articles of food.